

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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P R 221214Z MAR 77
FM AMCONSUL LENINGRAD
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3031
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY
USMISSION BERLIN
AMEMBASSY BERLIN UNN
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 LENINGRAD 344

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS 4
TAGS: PINT, PFOR, SCUL, US, UR
SUBJ: SLOGAN PAINTERS RECEIVE HARSH SENTENCES

1. SUMMARY: LENINGRAD SLOGAN PAINTERS RECEIVED CLOSE
TO MAXIMUM ALLOWABLE SENTENCES MAR 19. THEY WERE PROSECUTED
STRICTLY ON CRIMINAL CHARGES WITH AUTHORITIES DROPPING
ALL POLITICAL CHARGES OF ANTI-SOVIET ACTIVITIES SOME
TIME BEFORE TRIAL. HANDLING UNDOUBTEDLY WAS CALCULATED
TO BLUNT EXPECTED WESTERN CRITICISM OF POLITICAL TRIAL
AND FURTHER CHARGES OF HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS.
EXPLICIT CHARGES OF WESTERN COMPLICITY DID NOT ARISE
DURING THE TRIAL OR IN SUBSEQUENT PRESS TREATMENT.
END SUMMARY.

2. AS ADDRESSEES WILL ALREADY HAVE LEARNED FROM
PRESS ACCOUNTS, LENINGRAD SLOGAN PAINTERS OLEG VOLKOV
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AND YURIY RYBAKOV WERE SENTENCED ON MARCH 19,
RESPECTIVELY, TO 7 AND 6 YEARS HARD LABOR UNDER
STRICT REGIME. SENTENCE FOLLOWED FOUR DAY TRIAL
MARCH 14-17 WITH FRIDAY GIVEN OVER TO CONSID-
ERATION OF EVIDENCE BY THE COURT. BOTH ALSO WERE
SLAPPED WITH SUBSTANTIAL FINES AMOUNTING TO 4,190
RUBLES FOR RYBAKOV AND 1,460 FOR VOLKOV. WE

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING TO BE MOST IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF TRIAL.

3. IN SURPRISE TACK, OSTENISBLY DESIGNED TO PROVIDE MOST EFFECTIVE POSSIBLE COUNTER TO EXPECTED WESTERN CHARGES OF POLITICAL TRIAL VIOLATING FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS, LENINGRAD PROSECUTOR QUIETLY DROPPED ALL POLITICAL CHARGES UNDER ARTICLE 70 (ANTI-SOVIET AGITATION AND PROPAGANDA) SOME TIME DURING PRE-TRIAL INVESTIGATION, AND CONFINED TRIAL SOLELY TO CRIMINAL CHARGES OF DESTROYING STATE PROPERTY, GROSS HOOLIGANISM, AND LARCENY. AT THE SAME TIME, PROBABLY CONSIDERING THAT TRIAL COULD NOT BE KEPT SECRET IN ANY CASE, DECISION WAS MADE TO HOLD OPEN TRIAL AND UPI CORRESPONDENT, EMIL SVEILIS, WAS PERMITTED TO ATTEND. TRIAL THUS COULD BE TOUTED STRICTLY AS CONVENTIONAL POLICE ACTION AGAINST CRIMINAL ELEMENTS.

4. AUTHORITIES ALSO PROBABLY WERE FULLY CONVINCED THAT EVEN UNDER CRIMINAL CHARGES EVIDENCE WAS STRONG ENOUGH TO ACHIEVE HARD SENTENCES THEY WERE AFTER. AS IT TURNED OUT, SENTENCES RECEIVED WERE CLOSE TO MAXIMUM EIGHT YEARS ALLOWABLE UNDER CHARGES. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES, SENTENCES BEING VIEWED AS SEVERE BOTH BY DEFENSE AND LOCAL DISSIDENT CIRCLES.

5. ALTHOUGH HIGHLY POLITICAL NATURE OF THE CHARGES WAS EVIDENT DURING TRIAL ITSELF, INCLUDING IN REMARK CONFIDENTIAL

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BY JUDGE DURING SENTENCING THAT ACTIONS WERE "A BLACK MARK ON THIS CITY OF REVOLUTIONARY TRADITION," TRIAL WAS UNPUBLICIZED, AND ATTENDED BY ONLY RELATIVELY FEW LENINGRADERS. OFFICIAL VERSION OF TRIAL AS POLICE EFFORT TO DEAL WITH DESTRUCTIVE CRIMINAL TYPE WAS THEN UNDERLINED BY EMOTIONAL ARTICLE IN MARCH 20 LENINGRADSKAYA PRAVDA PORTRAYING DEFENDENTS AS HOOLIGANS WITH CRIMINAL RECORDS MALICIOUSLY INTENT ON DESTROYING GREAT ARCHITECTURAL MONUMENTS WHICH SOVIET GOVT AND LENINGRADERS HAD SACRIFICED SO MUCH TO PRESERVE. ARTICLE CAREFULLY AVOIDS ANY REFERENCES TO POLITICAL ASPECTS OF TRIAL. ONLY REFERENCE ALLUDING IN ANY WAY TO SLOGANS IS VAGUE PASSING COMMENT THAT DEFENDENTS CONSIDERED "ARCHITECTURAL CREATIONS" AS "FENCES WHERE THEY COULD PRACTICE FOUL LANGUAGE." LENINGRADSKAYA PRAVDA ARTICLE PLAYS ON "FAIRY TALE BEAUTY" OF LENINGRAD AND CONTRSTS SOVIET GOVERNMENT'S HITORICAL CONCERN FOR PROTECTING GREAT CREATIONS OF PAST WITH DISGRACEFUL ACTIONS

OF SLOGAN PAINTERS IN DOING MORE THAN 10,000
RUBLES DAMAGE. ARTICLE ALSO CARRIES
DETAILED ACCOUNTS OF THEFTS FOR WHICH DEFENDENTS
CHARGED AND EXTENSIVE BIOGRAPHIC MATERIAL DESIGNED
TO SHOW THEM AS IMMORAL PARASITES WITH ARTISTIC
PRETENSIONS BUT NO SERIOUS ARTISTIC QUALIFICATIONS,
WHOSE LIVES HAVE BEEN GIVEN OVER TO IDLENESS, CRIME,
AND DECADENT LIVING.

6. THERE WERE NO SPECIFIC CHARGES DURING TRIAL OR IN L.P.
ARTICLE OF FOREIGN COMPLICITY IN SLOGAN PAINTERS ACTIONS AND
NO REFERENCES TO INVOLVEMENT OF ANY FOREIGN INDIVIDUALS.
IT DID COME OUT AT TRIAL THAT ONE OF 16 SLOGANS WHICH
DEFENDENTS ADMITTED PAINTING WAS "LISTEN TO THE VOICE
OF AMERICA". ACCORDING TO TESTIMONY, THIS SLOGAN
WAS PAINTED APPROPRIATELY ON THE DISPLAY WINDOW OF
THE RADIO SHOP IN LENINGRAD'S MAIN DEPARTMENT STORE,
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GOSTINY DVOR. COURT REFERENCE TO THE VOA SLOGAN
BROUGHT SNICKERS FROM OBSERVERS AND ONE AUDIBLE COMMENT,
"WE DON'T NEED TO BE TOLD.". L.P. CLAIMED THAT DEFENDENTS'
READING WAS MAINLY PRONOGRAPHY "DELIVERED BY OCCASION
FROM WEST" AND THEIR "MAIN 'SPIRITUAL' GOOD" WAS "PROPAGANDA"
FROM STATIONS LIKE "LIBERTY".

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 LENINGRAD 344

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7. TRIAL INVOLVED ONLY VOLKOV AND RYBAKOV.
PROSECUTOR DROPPED CHARGES AGAINST NATALIA LESNICHENKO
DURING INVESTIGATIVE STAGE, PROBABLY DECIDING THAT
PURELY CRIMINAL CHARGES AGAINST HER WERE TOO SLIM
TO BE UP-HELD IN COURT AND COULD WEAKEN CASE AGAINST
PRINCIPAL OFFENDERS. DURING TRIAL RYBAKOV AND VOLKOV
CONFESSED TO PAINTING ALL SLOGANS THEMSELVES AND
INSISTED STEADFASTLY THAT NO ONE ELSE WAS INVOLVED
IN PLANNING OR CARRYING OUT ACTS. LENINGRAD
AUTHORITIES APPARENTLY PREPARED LIVE WITH THIS FOR
PURPOSES OF OPEN TRIAL, BUT THERE ARE AMPLE INDICATIONS
THAT NUMBER OF OTHERS WERE IN FACT INVOLVED IN ONE WAY
OR ANOTHER AND WE HAVE NO DOUBT THAT KGB HAS
ASSEMBLED NUMBER OF OTHER DOSSIERS WHICH IT WILL
DRAW FROM WHEN THE TIME IS RIPE.

8. AS INTERESTING SIDELIGHT, WE HAVE LEARNED THAT
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YULIYA VOZNESENSKAYA ILLEGALLY RETURNED FROM EXILE
IN VORKUTA TO ATTEND TRIAL, HIDING OUT IN VLADIMIR
BORISOV'S APARTMENT. KGB RAID ON APARTMENT MARCH 17
WAS SPOTTED BY BORISOV WHO WAS OUT WALKING THE DOG
AND DRAMATIC ARREST SCENE FOLLOWED. AFTER GAME
FIGHT, WHICH INVOLVED BLOCKING THE DOOR AND SCUFFLE,
VOZNESENSKAYA, BORISOV, BORISOV'S MOTHER, IRENE
KAZARINOVA AND NATALIA LESNICKENKO, WERE ARRESTED FOR
"OBSTRUCTING JUSTICE." ALL EXCEPT VOZNESENSKAYA
WERE RELEASED THE NEXT DAY AFTER BEING FINED.
PRESUMABLY VOZNESENSKAYA HAS BEEN SENT BACK
TO EXILE IN VORKUTA. BORISOV, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN
PERMITTED TO GO FREE AND ON MARCH 19 WAS EVEN GIVEN
HIS PASSPORT BACK. HE HAS TOLD HIS CONTACTS THAT
HE MAY SOON GO TO MOSCOW TO JOIN HIS DISSIDENT
FRIENDS THERE.

9. COMMENT: THE TACTIC OF THE LENINGRAD
AUTHORITIES IN HOLDING AN OPEN TRIAL LIMITED STRICTLY
TO CRIMINAL CHARGES CAME AS A SURPRISE TO OUR
DISSIDENT CONTACTS HERE, USED TO HIGHLY POLITICAL
TONE USUALLY ACCORDED TO ALL DISSIDENT ACTIONS BY
POLITBURO MEMBER AND LENINGRAD REGIONAL PARTY
BOSS, GRIGORIY ROMANOV. WE DO NOT KNOW AT WHAT

PRECISE POINT IN INVESTIGATION LENINGRAD AUTHORITIES
DECIDED TO DROP ALL POLITICAL CHARGES, BUT AT LEAST
ONE OF OUR SOURCES HAS SAID THAT IT COINCIDED ROUGHLY
WITH PRESIDENT CARTER'S INCREASED EMPHASIS ON SOVIET
HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS.NEUBERT

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